Introduction:

Protesting national identity

In 1968 and the early months of 1969 anti-Vietnam War activists gathered in the underground passageways of Shinjuku Station on a Saturday night to sing folk songs and listen to antiwar speeches. With a name that made it sound like a cross between a renegade force and a hippy movement, the Tokyo Folk Guerilla concerts saw as many as 7000 activists crowding into the underground plaza and surrounding passageways.\(^1\) Held in a subway station below one of Tokyo’s burgeoning city centres, the concerts were in many ways an underground movement of student sects and activists embracing images from the American civil rights movement. On the other hand, with Shinjuku being one of the world’s biggest and busiest train stations the Folk Guerilla activists were coming into contact with millions of commuters from all over Japan. Shinjuku was the point of intersection between activists and the ‘ordinary people’ converging on Tokyo. In a slight metaphorical twist the protest went underground at Shinjuku in an endeavour to be inclusive and representative, to bring ‘the people’ of Japan into contact with political activism. ‘Everybody sing together,’ read one pamphlet distributed around the newly ordained ‘citizens plaza,’ ‘Sing for the protection of fundamental human rights - for freedom of thought and freedom of expression.’\(^2\) There was a sense of both hope and urgency underpinning the gatherings, as underground activists sought to excavate new sites for popular political expression.

Far from being marginal or illicit, the activist politics implicit in the Folk Guerilla concerts were integral to the opportunity and economic prosperity that surfaced in 1960s Japan. They were events that touched the everyday life of all Japanese, that beckoned them to participate and bring meaning to their democratic ideals. Action, agency and protest were notions that seeped through the social and political terrain. They were fundamental to the process

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of democratic political renewal, and the search for an active base in the wake of the authoritarian political institutions of wartime Japan. Today, accounts of protest and political upheaval have been enclosed in the hazy memories of radicalism, youth, ideological battles and student activism. I will argue that the Folk Guerilla demonstrations at Shinjuku Station, and the activism that swept Japan in the 1960s, represented a means through which to articulate a new sense of identity. Protest and activism represented the embodiment of a nation identified around the precepts of an autonomous self and an autonomous society.

Protest

From the opening months of the 1960s protest saturated the political landscape. The 1960 Ampo protests, centred upon the ratification of the revised US-Japan Security Treaty (abbreviated in Japanese as Ampo) and the undemocratic way that it was passed through the Diet, are widely regarded as a pivotal moment in Japan’s postwar development. Opposition groups flooded onto the streets in protest, expressing concern at the military nature of the Ampo alliance, its implications for Japan’s place in the world, and the apparent disregard for democratic process in its ratification. Opposition parties and student groups organized demonstrations around the clock, millions of people braved the monsoon rains signing petitions, engaging in work stoppages and demonstrating in the streets of the major cities. 1960 Ampo set the tone for the entire decade, providing the opening stanza to a period engulfed in protest.

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3 According to the critics of the political machinations in 1960, the Kishi Cabinet should have dissolved the Diet and ‘let the voice of the Japanese people be heard.’ By Australian parliamentary standards the ratification of the treaty was in fact democratic because the government had a majority in the House. Nevertheless, in Japan it was deemed crucial that the government attain political consensus with the Opposition parties before passing the ratified treaty. It was believed that while the Kishi Cabinet had the distribution of Diet seats it did not have widespread public support. For accounts of the episode in English see, Rikki Kersten, Democracy in Postwar Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy, Routledge, London, 1996; George Packard, Protest in Tokyo: The Security Treaty Crisis of 1960, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966; Sasaki-Uemura, Wesley Mak, ‘Citizen and Community in the 1960 Anpo Protests,’ unpublished PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1993; Robert Scalapino & Masumi Junnosuke, Parties and Politics in Contemporary Japan, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1964.
Spurred by opposition to the Vietnam War, discontent within the universities, environmental concerns, social dislocation and anticipation of the *Ampo* treaty’s renewal set down for a decade later in 1970, the entire period saw a seemingly endless display of political activism. During the late 1960s anti-Vietnam War activist, Oda Makoto referred to the atmosphere of the period as a ‘whirlpool of humanity’ (*ningen no uzumaki*).\(^4\) The folk guerilla concerts in Shinjuku Station; protests at Haneda Airport; the underground movement to assist US soldiers deserting their units and escaping the war in Vietnam; demonstrations against the visit of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier; the barricading of university buildings; and the protests surrounding the renewal of the *Ampo* treaty in 1970, were just some of the sites of activism in a much wider milieu of political participation and protest.

The idea of protest remains amorphous and difficult to define. In many ways containing the notion of *protest* and *protest movements* to a single definition would be to contradict my desire to map the shifting terrain of its representation. In the eyes of the activists of the 1960s it does, of course, encompass street demonstrations, petitioning, anti-government publications and opposition to government policy, but extends into the domain of political independence, individual responsibility, a commitment to personal morality, autonomy and political agency. Only in the case of confrontation with authorities does the Japanese term for protest – *kōgi* – pertain. The notion of protest is much broader than fighting *against*, or *opposing*. It encompasses the idea of *undō*, a word denoting both activism and exercise - to be active. But even here the concept remains amorphous, dependent upon the particular context of its articulation.

Many protest movements were, to be sure, simply reactionary or instrumental in their pursuit of political or economic objectives. Others fought ideological battles and were driven by a commitment to revolution and fundamental social change. The terms *shimin undō* (citizens’ activism), *gakusei undō* (student activism) and *jūmin undō* (residents’ activism) denote the variety of activists and alliances that were established during this period. The character and scope

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\(^4\) See for example, Oda Makoto (ed.) *Shukan Ampo*, Amposha, Tokyo, Vol. 0, June 1968, 2.
of protest shifted over the course of the 1960s as new sites of activism were discovered and nurtured. It is for this reason that I have used the term ‘cultures of protest’ – it denotes the plurality of ideals and agendas that existed within the protest movements as well as hinting at the congruence that was implicit in the 1960s. There was a multiplicity of voices, distinct movements and cultures that came together to define the national imaginary within the crucially important domain of protest.

The notion of autonomy was central to the articulation of a postwar national identity in the 1950s and 1960s. Autonomy was determined differently by various intellectuals and activists, but it invariably denoted the capacity of persons to reflect critically upon desires, wishes and beliefs. Autonomy was a notion denoting freedom from external constraints. An autonomous person had a will of his or her own and was able to act in pursuit of self-chosen goals and purposes. In this sense the notion of autonomy begs the question: autonomy from what? In postwar Japan it was a notion that eschewed the role of the state in determining the peoples way of life and political values. It rested upon the proposition that the state was not neutral and that autonomy from the state was crucial to conceptions of democracy and identity. The idea of ‘civil society’ emerged as one of the key sites at which the notion of autonomy gained a foothold in Japan. It provided a social space in which the people could embrace activism and protest, and thereby embody an autonomous self. Nevertheless, autonomy denoted more than simply the notion of individual subjectivity; it provided the foundation for myriad competing conceptions of political practice and identity.

Members of anti-Vietnam War group Beheiren (Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō) played a pivotal role in encouraging and defining the nature of autonomy. The writing and activism of this disparate group of activists

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5 As I will illustrate throughout this thesis, while the notion of ‘democracy’ is not limited to protest on the part of civil society against the state, in the minds of activists in the 1960s this opposition was fundamental – it underpinned dominant conceptions of democratic practice.

provides the foundation for my analysis of the cultures of protest in this thesis. Beheiren emerged in opposition to the Vietnam War in 1965 and were vocal in protesting the conservative government’s foreign policy and the relationship that had been established with the United States. Beheiren had been ushered in amidst discontent not only with the policies of the conservative government but also with the ‘old left’. They harboured concern about the accountability of government and industry and the responsiveness of the booming economy to community, history, political ideals, and identity. Its founders had fashioned Beheiren not simply to protest against the Vietnam War, but to rethink the nature of domestic politics, and to shape debates over Japan’s place in the world.

Through the mostly liberal intellectuals and activists of Beheiren we can take a glimpse at the protests of the 1960s and determine some of the ideals emanating from the sites of activism. Analyzing protest largely through the writing of Beheiren members ensures that I avoid the meta-narratives that have come to dominate our understandings of the past. Beheiren provides an avenue into the political terrain of the period, a position from which to read protest, rather than being the source for a definitive History. Their activism also reveals the central role that the notion autonomy played in defining the nature of Japan’s democratic development. Protest was the sphere through which postwar political ideals and identities were both given a voice and contested. Protest was the site at which to embody Japanese democracy, and to perform the national imaginary of postwar Japan.

7 In English this translates as the Citizens Federation for Peace in Vietnam. However, Beheiren used the name Peace in Vietnam Committee.
8 In Japan the Old Left referred to the organized opposition parties such as the Japan Communist Party (Kyōsantō) and the Japan Socialist Party (Shakaitō) and the socialist led trade union federation Sōhyō. The New Left basically referred to the leftist organizations and movements that defined themselves in opposition to the old left. Its genesis is thought to be from around 1956 following the Hungarian Uprising, criticisms of Stalin and the concurrent disillusionment with a JCP that disavowed the ‘left-wing adventurism’ (armed struggle) of the past. See Takazawa Kōji, Takagi Masayuki & Kurata Kazunari, Shinjūyoku Nijū nen Shi: Hanran no Kiseki, Shinsensha, Tokyo, 1981; Takazawa Kōji, Rekishi to shite no Shinjūyoku, Shinsensha, Tokyo, 1996; Muto Ichiyo & Inoue Reiko, ‘Beyond the New Left: in search of a radical base in Japan (Parts 1-2),’ AMPO: Pacific Asia Quarterly Review, Vol. 17, No. 2, 3 & 4, PARC, Tokyo, 1985, pp. 20-35 (part 1), pp. 54-73 (part 2), pp. 51-57 (part 2, cont).
Reading protest

The focus of studies considering activist groups such as Beheiren has been concerned primarily with the reaction to the Vietnam War in Japan. Thomas Havens’ comprehensive study of the period draws attention to the ‘self examination and redefinition’ of Japan’s place in the world ushered in by the hostilities in Vietnam. Likewise Ishihara Moeki considers the intellectual reaction to the conflict and the apparent antipathy towards the United States that was generated. The Vietnam War, and Japan’s involvement with the US war effort, was a major catalyst for protest during this period and introduced widespread political turmoil into Japanese politics. The reaction to the war in Vietnam provides an important point of departure for my thesis, but I am ultimately concerned with the dynamics of protest and its centrality to conceptions of politics and society, rather than as a reaction to political affairs. I am concerned with the nature and character of protest.

The unprecedented economic growth, industrial expansion and consumption that underpinned the Japanese economy in this period had a significant impact upon protest and the way that it has been read. For the entire decade economic growth was sustained at over 10%. All of the key economic indicators exploded; consumer goods proliferated, wages rose, large numbers of people moved into the big centres of Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka, massive investment projects were undertaken and the structure of the Japanese economy was radically transformed. With some justification it is often described as the ‘economic miracle’; the incredible success story of ‘Asian modernity’ and a point of national pride. Over the course of the 1960s the Japanese economy had exploded onto the world stage and Japan had emerged from the period of postwar hardship, as an economic success story.

With this in mind many have depicted 1960s Japan within the rubric of ‘economic nationalism’ and protest has been largely understood in relation to, or at least on the margins of, this overarching national ideal. Kurihara Akira notes that the early 1960s spawned a kind of ‘production inspired nationalism’ (sangyōryoku nashonarizumu), with policy and ideology being built upon the ideals of economic development and the opportunities that it afforded. Protest is understood as an externality of economic success – a reaction to the social and environmental costs of unchecked economic growth and industrial expansion. Focusing primarily on the relationship between protest and the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) many have considered protest as an important instrument through which to challenge the policies of the government and overturn political decisions. In this sense protest is considered as a reaction to injustice, or a sphere through which to voice opposition to the conservative government and industry rather than one nurturing a positive foundation for identity. Indeed the activists in the Minamata struggle for example, where the waste output of the Chissō Corporation had been afflicting local residents with mercury poisoning, were active out of necessity, responding to the excesses of Japan’s rampant economic development rather than extolling a commitment to democratic reform. Victor Koschmann has employed the idea of ‘instrumental protest’ to describe these movements, a term denoting the concrete agenda of the activists and distinguishing it from ideologically driven agendas and ideas.

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Closely related to these attempts to categorize political activism in terms of goal orientation are the sociological accounts of protest movements that focus primarily on the structure of the organizations and alliances. Yoshio Sugimoto for example, employed a sociological approach in order the rethink the notions of consensus and group centred behaviour that others have deemed a defining feature of Japanese society. Activists themselves also employed a sociological approach in appraising Japan’s democratic potential, often lamenting the social and psychological impediments to political reform. Finally, Patricia Steinhoff examined the characteristics of the student movements of the 1960s in order to explicate the position of the students in society and the competing influences on their formation and identity.

Outside the domain of individual community protest and the ‘instrumental’ protests of particular localities activism has been considered as a ‘rite of passage’ - the political outpouring of discontented youth in an age of rapid economic development. Ellis Krauss for example focuses on the issue of shūshoku tenkō (employment conversion), subscribing to the belief that protest is generational, a flurry of youth, that bears very little significance for political institutions or democracy. Today this attitude comes through in many of the popular accounts of the period and the accounts recorded by the activists themselves. ‘The time when you were revolutionary’ (Ano koro kimi wa kakumei teki datta) reads the cover of a recent publication titled 1968: Youth Inside the Barricades. The use of the singular (you) and the past tense (were) in this statement ensures that it does not denote the revolution or change of political institutions, it is simply a nostalgic appeal to youth. It denotes the

recollection of youthful exuberance, a de-politicized memory of self-centred protest and resistance: the time when ‘you were revolutionary’ rather than ‘when society was revolutionized.’

While the subject matter and focus of inquiry is radically different, the focus upon protest as a reaction to economic and environmental problems and the focus upon youth, has seen protest marginalised in our understanding of the 1960s. In both accounts protest has become read as a rite of passage for industrializing Japan, with activists quickly paid off by the luxury of capitalist consumer goods that economic growth had to offer. Ascribing political protest to a generation – to a confluence of youth and protest – undermines the significance of activism, banishing it to the domain of youth psychology.

Ascribing protest to a stage of life also blinds us to its implications for the wider political culture, and its centrality to the debates over democracy and political participation. Members of Beheiren crossed the generational divide, making the whole idea of a clearly delineated generation almost meaningless. They were certainly not driven by the dictates of youthful exuberance and they played a crucial role in both intellectual and political debates, while also nurturing ties with student activists. In my analysis of protest I am concerned with the ‘possibility’ (kanōsei) invested within protest and the conceptions of identity emanating from the sites of activism. I am reading protest as a text from which to decipher the voices of political renewal and social change, excavating it from the margins and deciphering its historical location. Paradoxically it is youth that allows me to do this. Not a pining for lost youth or memories of the 1960s as the ‘spring of life’ (seishun), but the fact that the 1960s predates my youth, it predates me. The 1960s as History is now possible.

An alternative approach to protest within existing literature has been to focus upon the international dimensions of activism. Disavowing notions of both a generation gap and the analysis that looks to the uniqueness of Japanese movements, some scholars have employed ‘social movement theory,’ thereby exposing the structural imperatives driving the formation of citizens’ movements internationally. ‘Social movements’ generally refer to political
movements that shift the balance of power in society and open up new spheres for political participation. In relation to 1960s Japan activists and scholars alike have turned to the sociological approach of social movement theory, in order to draw attention to the international dimension of protest and the confluence of political, economic and social institutions and ideas across the globe. Thomas Rochon argues that citizens’ movements evince a trend that manifests itself among many advanced industrial democracies in response to overly bureaucratized society and unresponsive political institutions.

To be sure the international confluence of protest, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the civil rights movement, and the development of the ‘New Left’ in the 1960s, gave impetus to protest in Japan. Many activists became part of the international networks and participated in conferences, with a steady stream of leftist intellectuals and activists visiting Japan during this period. Internationalism, as both the engagement with non-Japanese movements, and a barometer against which to measure the strength of Japan’s modernity and autonomy, characterized the political terrain. For some the international dimension was a sign of Japan’s own pilgrimage towards modernity. For others it was a sign that international revolution was becoming a reality and Japan was to play a central role.

A crucial part of the international agenda in postwar Japan was Marxism. Regardless of political persuasion intellectuals were conversant with the language of Marxism, discovering a voice through which to explain the

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23 The idea of the ‘New Left’ in the America was defined not simply in opposition to the old left. It was characterized by political activism informed by the concept that ‘the personal is political.’ Jonathon Green writes, ‘your political stance began in your lifestyle, in what you actually did, not some external theory.’ Nevertheless, the New Left should not be confused with the Hippy Movement – New Left activists were certainly not interested in ‘dropping out.’ See, Jonathon Green, All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture, Pimlico, Random House, London, 1998, 238.
disaster of the Pacific War in terms of feudal remnants, capitalist contradictions and the hegemony of the ruling classes. It provided the universal principles that transcended the disastrous, particularistic values of the imperial state. Marxism provided the terms upon which to conceptualize the ‘new Japan’ of the postwar period and its inevitable transition to democratic, and ultimately socialist, society. In the immediate postwar years these powerful intellectual ideas were given further efficacy by the status of Communists who had defied the ruling elite during the Pacific War and spoken out against the imperial leaders. As noted by John Dower, defeat gave Communist leaders such as Tokuda Kyūichi and Nosaka Sanzō charisma, ‘imbuing them with an aura of integrity and political acuity.’

The efficacy of Marxism is evident in the work of all of the activists and intellectuals that I will consider in this thesis. Even for the most liberal thinkers Marxism provided the intellectual standard against which they located their political ideals and hopes. Nevertheless, to think about the politics of the 1950s and 1960s through the ideological filter of Marxist theory would be to disregard the way in which its theoretical ideas were rethought, challenged or simply eschewed even by the most avid Marxists. As I will indicate in Chapter One Marxism provided a useful basis from which to locate Japan in the modern world but certainly did not override the importance of particular conceptions of political practice.

Accounts that seek to locate Japan within the wider networks of international protest are also prone to lose sight of protests’ temporal and spatial specificity. For Japanese activists the international dimension of movements and ideas was, paradoxically, of national significance. Just as in the United States during this period, protest operated within a distinct political, social and cultural matrix, feeding off the international fervour of the period but ultimately contesting and engaging domestic political institutions. The conceptual logic underpinning protest, the history of its theoretical enunciation and the logic of its performance were bound within conceptions of the nation.

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The most useful scholarship on protest for my purposes has been largely concerned with the implications of protest for democracy and its impact upon the nature of Japan’s political institutions and practices. James White for example, in his article on the trends in postwar protest and activism, posits the question: ‘What are the prospects for democracy?’ and considers the issue of whether the movements are effective. White distinguishes between interest groups, the partisan left and radicals, arguing that the less structured forms of opposition contributed more to the causes of social justice and democracy than their ideologically driven counterparts. Patricia Steinhoff also considers protest as an indication of democratic hope in the face of otherwise authoritarian political institutions, and outlines the ‘genuine policy consequences’ of its existence in Japan. Likewise, Margaret McKeans focuses on the development of citizens’ movements and environmental activism highlighting their significant role in the process of political reform and renewal.

In many ways the recent genealogy of events has dictated the focus of the existing studies of protest and citizens’ movements. Their significance is still unfolding and they have been predominantly considered within the rubric of personal histories, sociological inquiry, and political theory, rather than a broader historical framework. The focus upon protest as the realization of Japan’s democracy, or its democratic potential, is a good illustration of this,

28 With regard to Beheiren see for example, Fukumi Setsuo, Demo to Jiýū to Kōkishin to, Daisan Shokan, Tokyo, 1991; Oda Makoto, Beheiren Kaikoroku de wa nai Kaiko, Daisan Shōkan, Tokyo 1997; Yoshikawa Yūichi, Hansen Heiwa no Shiisō to Undō – Komentāru Sengo 50-nen, Shakai Hyōronsha, Tokyo, 1995; Yoshikawa Yūichi, Shimin Undō no Mondai: Betonamu Kara Mirai e, Shiisō no Kagakusha, Tokyo, 1991.
replicating the doubts of the activists themselves: *Is Japan democratic yet?* The analysis has weighed into these debates and alerted us to the important role that citizens’ movements have played as the representatives of a civil society, the new spheres for political participation and activism that were opened up, and the challenge that the movements represented to the government. Autonomy and modernity operated as the barometer against which political developments and activism were considered, and the formation of protest movements during the 1960s was invariably seen in relation to democratic ideals and the possibility of a democratic Japan.

Rather than dwell upon the issue of whether Japan is democratic, I will trace the shifting character of democratic practices and the new sites that emerged for political expression. Protest movements of the 1960s certainly defined themselves in relationship to the state and government policies, contesting political decisions and social cleavages. Nevertheless, with the continual reappraisal of Japan’s democratic potential and a search for new forms of democratic activism, protesters were concerned with staking out a domain for a society that was independent of the institutions of the state. Thus it was more than simply *against* the state. It cannot be explained away as an indication of conflict in an otherwise consensual political culture, an externality of capitalism, or a phase in an otherwise prosperous process of postwar development.

**Re-reading protest**

In this thesis I will consider protest not simply as a mode of political expression, or as an indication of Japan’s democratic success, but as a site for social change and political renewal. Responding to the apparent limitations that beset democracy’s transplantation into Japan during the Occupation period (1945-1952), the question of Japan’s democratic potential shaped the political terrain of the 1960s. Activists were concerned with bringing new meaning to political processes, and circumventing the limitations of Japan’s political institutions. Cultures of protest developed their own identity and spheres of influence independently of the state and provided important sites at which to contest and define Japan’s postwar reconstruction. The development of activism, agency and protest during this period was integral to the
development of democratic practices and ideas. In this reading the question: *Is Japan democratic yet?* is of interest for the significance of its articulation rather than being a question that I will seek to answer. It reveals a notion of ‘society,’ taken to mean the institutional practices and ideas that distinguish the people as a group - the ways of behaving - that places the realization of democracy, and the negotiation of its character, at its core. It denotes an implicitly *national* society that constantly reflects upon the rights and obligations of its citizens; a society in which membership hinges upon active participation.

In the aftermath of the Pacific War activists were concerned with negotiating the space between society and the state and articulating a sphere of political activism that was independent from the political institutions of the state. Of course, society and the state are not mutually exclusive entities or independent of each other: participants in the institutions of the state are also members of the society. While many activists tried to divorce themselves from the state it continued to legislate policy and law, it continued to set the political and economic agenda, and it continued to define the nation’s foreign policy. Perhaps the starkest example of the dilemma posed was that many universities were state-run institutions. The negotiation of a distinction between society and the state and the imagination of an independent ‘public sphere’ or ‘civil society’ was one of the key tasks facing the intellectuals and activists within the cultures of protest.

The centrality of activism and agency to political philosophy and the concurrent upheaval of the 1960 *Amпо* demonstrations ensured that the notion of a civil society became important. Civil society marked out a new political and social realm in which the people of postwar Japan could become active citizens; a sphere in which ‘the people’ found a voice within political debate. Protest was not a way of simply confronting the policies of the government, it provided a site at which to bring meaning to ‘the people’ of postwar Japan as

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citizens of an autonomous society. The ideals of agency, activism and protest that underpinned conceptions of autonomy represented the fabric of Japan’s social imaginary, the expression of its modern subjectivity. In this regard the nation was not simply a contradiction or anomaly that crept into debates over society and the state, it provided the central focus. The postwar nation provided the foundation upon which ideas about the notion of autonomy and civil society could be understood and articulated.

It is this confluence of ideas about civil society with hopes for postwar national reconstruction - the culture and politics implicit within notions of civil society – that informs my understanding of protest in 1960s Japan. The enactment of an autonomous Japan, whether it be one founded within socialist or liberal conceptions of democracy, or one that eschewed the very notion of democracy, provided a vehicle not just for political activism but for articulating a vision of the postwar national identity. For many of the activists in Beheiren, the performance of democracy, the realization of a democratic self, emerged as the frame through which a national imaginary could be projected. In this sense democracy emerged as both a process - a vehicle for political activism - and the basis of the postwar self-image. Within protest activists sought both to affect political change and project the values underpinning national identity.

‘The people’ as active citizens provided a powerful basis from which to articulate a modern postwar national identity. Groups such as Beheiren came to the fore to bring meaning to a nation that was determined through the very process of its articulation. For the myriad writers, artists and intellectuals vying to enunciate the scope and character of the postwar national identity in the 1960s the contingency and fluidity of identity was all too apparent. It was not only the characteristic of pacifism that defined the terrain of postwar Japan but the process of performing democracy, the idea of engaging in protest and

30 All activists and intellectuals did not employ the notion of civil society (shimin shakai) during this period nevertheless it is a useful analytic concept because it denotes a distinction between society and the state. It is a broad concept that appealed to both Marxist (through the work of Gramsci and Hegel) and Liberal thinkers (Hobbes and Locke).
activism. The national identity was a production; through protest, the activists of Beheiren sought to define, transform and bring a modern, democratic postwar identity to life.

The first half of this thesis illustrates that during the 1960s the ways in which identity was imagined was based not simply on the tyranny of the state or even the states’ control over the nation’s discursive formation, but on the ability of antiwar activists, students and citizens to dislodge and re-inscribe its imaginings. Protest gave ‘the people’ an avenue through which to articulate a sense of national identity, and to determine its discursive boundaries, outside the auspices of the state. The postwar national imaginary was being articulated on the margins, in the protest cultures of 1960s Japan.

The centring of protest throws open the way for new readings of Japan’s national identity. It challenges notions that only the right speak for the nation in Japan, or that all forms of non-Western nationalism make recourse to an essentialised culture and tradition.\(^\text{32}\) I have employed the idea of *imaging national identity* and *nationality*, because they do not carry the same negative connotations as ‘nationalism.’ They denote the possibility of an identity that is open and malleable rather than one encoded in rigid notions of race, ethnicity, religion or culture. The nation still insists on difference – on the fact that identity is positioned within a culture, a language and a history. But it is not tied to fixed, permanent, unalterable positions. *Nationality* is, on the surface, completely empty of meaning: it is no more than a stamp on a passport, a legal term denoting country of affiliation. This is its greatest strength. Nationality highlights the uncanny nature of the nation’s imaginings and the disparate


voices that are *exposed* through the nation’s articulation rather than simply *enclosed* by its political institutions, or timeless traditions.

By focusing on the confluence of protest and the performance of postwar Japan I have endeavored to restore historicity to conceptions of national identity: to draw attention to the voices of postwar Japan that are all too often silenced by the fear of nationalism’s resurgence; the voices swept aside, marginalised or subsumed within histories of the nation-state; the stories of national identity lost within ‘invented traditions’ that blind us to the complexity and fluidity of the present and recent past. Emerging from within the sites of protest in 1960s Japan are conceptions of nationality framed within the ideal of autonomy, and embodied in protest and activism.

**Reading national identity**

Tracing the national imaginary from the 1950s to the 1970s gives us some indication of how protest might be understood within the context of identity formation. In Japan the basis for imagining identity during this period shifted from a stress upon universalism and humanism in the 1950s to a renewed focus upon culture and uniqueness in the 1970s – a journey that might be depicted as one from the universalism of the animated character of Astro Boy to the idea of cultural uniqueness espoused by movie legend, Torasan.

_Tetsuwan Atomu_, or Astro Boy as he was known in English, symbolized the hopes of the postwar nation as it sought to throw off the stigma of fascism and navigate a path in an increasingly hostile Cold War world.\(^{33}\) Tezuka Osamu’s creations eschewed a world defined by technological superiority and he emerged as a popular exponent of humanism, Japanese style. ‘Love all creatures,’ declared Tezuka, ‘love everything that has life. I have been trying to express this in all of my works, though, it has taken different forms. For example, as the presentation of nature, the blessing of life, the suspicion of a

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\(^{33}\) The producer of Astro Boy, Tezuka Osamu, also created characters such as Kimba and the series New Treasure Island (*Shintakarajima*). He produced Astro Boy in the 1950s in a series of black and white comics. See, Natsume Fusanosuke, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru*, Chikuma Shoten, Tokyo, 1995.
technologically oriented civilization, an aversion to war, and so on. The ideal of universalism captured many of the hopes and aspirations that underpinned Japan’s emergence from fascism, defeat and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Astro Boy, now intimately tied to the cultural commodities of manga and animation, is a symbol of the national ideals of the 1950s.

The national identity unfolding in figures such as Astro Boy contrasts starkly with the projection of identity embodied in the character of Torasan, a movie character that began in the 1970s. Torasan traipsed around the country working at various festivals (matsuri) and helping family or acquaintances. He was a representative of the enduring village community and the extended family of the nation, capturing the traditional and communitarian ideals that underpinned the political and cultural landscape of the 1970s. Torasan was a symbol of the nation’s cultural essence, representing a shift away from universalism as a foundation for national ideals and identity. Torasan evinces the crucial role of essentialised traditions and practices in the national imaginary.

The question to consider with regard to these national stories is, how did Japan navigate its way from the universalism of the 1950s to the cultural nationalism of the 1970s? Why did Torasan achieve pride of place over Astro Boy?

The appeal of consumption, prosperity and the concurrent notion of ‘economic nationalism,’ that has been associated with the period, falls short of explaining the shifting terrain of Japan’s national imaginary. By late 1964 smoke stacks and high-speed trains were a central feature of the geographic terrain in Japan. But the conflation of aggressive industrial policies, economic success and national pride, with national identity and nationalism, disguises far more than it could possibly illuminate. Even by the 1970s it was not the growth figures themselves but the unique cultural traits underpinning economic strength that provided the basis for national pride. It was not growth per se that informed

35 Ronald Dore, Taking Japan Seriously: A Confucian Perspective on Leading Economic Issues, Stanford University Press, Standford, 1987; Morishima Michio, Why Has Japan
the discourses on national identity but the characteristics that were thought to have facilitated that growth – the corporate structure, the loyal worker, the ie system (hierarchical groupism) of social management, Confucian diligence, Japanese uniqueness and a cultural aptitude for economic success.\(^{36}\) Even for some of the most radical activists of the period economic growth was simply a means to an end, a crucial part in the rebuilding process after the destruction of war and the deprivation of the 1950s. While industrialisation was surrounded by intense debate, economic growth was not a focus for either identity formation or strident opposition.\(^{37}\)

In this thesis I look towards the conceptions of democracy and the enactment of a democratic self in 1960s Japan in order to address the psychic shift that occurred in the projection of national identity. I will trace the often-competing ways in which autonomy and democracy have been imagined and produced in the 1960s through the various sites of protest and activism.

**Re-reading national identity**

Protest, and the polyphony of street magazines and journals through which it was discussed, advertised, remembered and celebrated, represents a radically different text through which to read the nationality of Japan. The manga of Tezuka Osamu and the movies of Torasan are far more transparent, they carry readily decipherable messages and symbols from which to understand the identities that abound. Protest, on the other hand, even when it is represented in a museum or photographic collection, is unstable. Its borders are sometimes difficult to recognize and the protagonists often resist the stories that he/she is


represented within. Protest provides us with a variety of competing and contradictory stories rather than carrying an easily decipherable moral or vision. Nevertheless, through protest we can trace the roads that were traveled in the journey from a national imaginary captured in the spirit of Astro Boy, to one that informed the escapades of Torasan.

The first three chapters of this thesis establish the centrality of protest to conceptions of national identity. Chapter One explores the ways in which notions of modernity and autonomy facilitated the marginalization of the state in conceptions of political practice and postwar national reconstruction. In the debates over modernity and autonomy in the 1950s and 1960s protest and activism were conceptualized as the means through which to live the democratic ideals that Japan had embraced in the aftermath of war and defeat. To be active citizens was deemed an important basis from which to realize the potential of a democratic country, and eschew the authoritarian politics of the past. While there were many competing claims on these ideas the notion of autonomy, and the ways in which it was determined and articulated, lay the conceptual ground for imagining postwar political practice.

Chapter Two focuses on the manifestation of these ideas within the anti-security treaty struggle of 1960 and the anticipation of 1970. The protests surrounding the renewal of the revised US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960 and 1970 exposed the failings of Japan’s democracy and the limitations of the parliamentary system as a foundation for democratic practice. Conversely, it was the site at which new conceptions of activism and political participation came to light and the seeds of a civil society were laid. The idea of protest was given concrete form and a basis for hope was established through which to perform a democratic Japan.

Chapter Three turns to the protest strategies of Beheiren and the empowerment of ‘the people’ as the autonomous subjects of a democratic Japan, a modern postwar nation. The reaction to the Vietnam War in Japan reveals a polyphony

of disparate voices vying to articulate a sense of postwar identity and the activism of groups such as Beheiren were central to these debates.

The final three chapters are case studies exploring the shifting meanings attributed to protest, autonomy, community and the nation during the 1960s. The ideas expressed through the sites of political activism and protest, as well as the vast number of reports, commentaries and debates that surrounded the protests, reveal the overlapping and often contradictory definitions of protest that emerged. These sites not only highlight the centrality of protest to postwar political culture and the character of Japan’s democracy, they also provide insights into the character of the nation, the boundaries of its imagination, and the shifting terrain of its articulation.

Traversing the spheres of protest were citizens’ rights groups (shimin undō) such as Beheiren. These groups emerged from within the fray of activism in the 1960s and played a key role in shaping the character of democratic expression. Over the course of the late 1960s the local struggles that flared up all over Japan were depicted as evidence of a burgeoning civil society. The people of Japan had stepped onto the stage of history as citizens, the agents of Japan’s modernity rather than simply the passive victims. Chapter Four focuses on the assistance given to American deserters from the Vietnam War. During this episode members of Beheiren sought to define an active citizenry (shimin) through representations of dissident America.

Community groups and residents’ movements (jūmin undō) were also emerging in this political milieu, contesting issues related to industrialization, environmental pollution and over development. They were forging a new space in which to contest the political authority of the government and influence the character and development of their rapidly changing communities and environments. In the 1960s cultures of protest, the term jūmin denoted a strong distinction between the local residents and their plight, and the agenda of political organizations that came to their assistance. Massive protests against environmental pollution at Minamata in Kyūshū mentioned earlier, and the activism at Sanrizuka with the building of Narita International
Airport are the most prominent examples. In Chapter Five I explore the January 1968 protests at Sasebo in Kyūshū through which the idea of residents activism (jūmin undō) was given concrete form and the idea of an autonomous village, an active community, emerged as an important point of reference for the imagination of a postwar democracy and identity. At Sasebo the village as an agent of protest reclaimed history, autonomy and self-definition as a foundation for national identity.

Finally, the number and frequency of university disputes increased dramatically from 1965 and culminated in the university struggles sparked at Tokyo University (Tōdaī) and Nihon University (Nichidai) in 1968-69. Takazawa Kōji refers to it as the ‘Zenkyōtō Era,’ named after the most important student alliance of the period, in which ‘activism spread throughout the country like wildfire.’ Universities were completely barricaded, classes cancelled and the streets and trains of the big cities regularly brought to a standstill by protesting students. Once again the possibility of a democratic Japan came into focus and the power of student activism (gakusei undō) was brought to the fore. Chapter Six considers the philosophical agenda that underpinned student activism and the importance of struggle in the realization of a democratic Japan. Paradoxically, it was in the notion of struggle that the logic of 1960s protest, and its centrality to identity formation, ultimately collapsed.

Each of these sites of protest reveal the disparate character of protest in 1960s Japan – the often competing tactics and agendas that were manifested within the burgeoning and dynamic civil society. They also reveal the underlying endeavour to shape the character and scope of Japan’s postwar identity and the strength of its democratic reconstruction. It was not simply about the realisation of a universal democracy, the journey along a predefined path towards modernity. The protests reveal a commitment to articulating new

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38 During the Sanrizuka struggle the alliance between the local farmers and outside protestors became so strained as to make the distinction crucial. Local farmers wanted to distinguish themselves from the violence of student groups and carefully locate their struggle in the local rice paddies of their homeland. David Apter & Nagayo Sawa, Against the State: Politics and Social Protest in Japan, 61-78.
39 Takazawa Kōji, Rekishi to shite no Shinsayoku, Shinsensha, Tokyo, 1996, 70-78.
forms of democratic process, while also providing a foundation for
determining the character of postwar Japan. Through the sites of protest ideas
about social and political autonomy came to the fore as the foundation for a
modern national imaginary.

Protest plumbed the depths of postwar Japan. At Shinjuku it went underground
only to meet the incoming trains, to touch the everyday lives of commuters
traversing the city though the underground subways; protest went underground
to touch the foundations of Japan’s society and politics, and shape the fabric of
its political ideals. Protest was the primary mode of expression for an active
citizenry, embracing political activism as a way of embodying Japan’s
democratic potential. Protest was a way of making democracy vibrant and real
in the face of its institutional irrelevance. The shifting definitions of protest
and the competing ideals that emerged from its various sites of articulation are
thereby crucial to our understanding of postwar Japan. Excavating these sites –
reading the character of protest and the ideals expressed – gives us insights
into the notions of autonomy and identity that coalesced within the political
culture of 1960s Japan.